AVATAR

The Last Airbender

Show #314

BOOK THREE: Fire
CHAPTER FOURTEEN: "The Boiling Rock, Part 1"

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ACT ONE

INT. WESTERN AIR TEMPLE - DINING AREA - NIGHT

The gang, including the extras, sits around a table enjoying a nice family dinner. A fire flickers. Zuko serves them all cups of tea from a tray.

ZUKO
No one can make tea like Uncle, but hopefully I learned a thing or two. Would you like to hear Uncle's favorite tea joke?

KATARA/ AANG/ TOPH
Sure./ I like jokes./ Bring it!

ZUKO
Okay, well I can't remember how it starts, but the punchline is:
(really selling it)
Leaf me alone, I'm bushed!

Despite his enthusiasm, his joke meets PAINFUL SILENCE. Zuko seems a little hurt or offended.

ZUKO (cont'd)
(defensive)
Well, it's funnier when Uncle tells it.

KATARA
Right... maybe that's because he remembers the whole thing.

Everyone laughs at Katara's quip. Even Zuko relents and manages a smile.

TOPH
It's nice to get a chance to relax a little. It hardly ever happens.

Everyone sips the tea, feeling soothed and warm. As Zuko puts a cup down for Sokka, we see that Sokka isn't relaxed at all. Something is troubling him. He looks up at Zuko.

SOKKA
Hey, can I talk to you for a second?

Sokka gets up and Zuko follows him out of the room.

INT. WESTERN AIR TEMPLE HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Zuko and Sokka step out for a little privacy.

ZUKO
So what's up?

Sokka is hesitant and cautious.

SOKKA
If someone was captured by the Fire Nation, where would they be taken?

ZUKO
What do you mean? Who was captured?

SOKKA
When the invasion plan failed some of our troops were taken... I just want to know where they might be.

Zuko eyes Sokka then shakes his head.

ZUKO
I can't tell you.

SOKKA
What? Why not?

ZUKO
Trust me, knowing will just make you feel worse.

Zuko WALKS away, but Sokka GRABS his arm.

SOKKA
It's my dad -- he was captured, too. I need to know what I put him through.

ZUKO
It's not good, Sokka.

SOKKA
Please...

Zuko considers for a beat.

ZUKO
My guess is, they were taken to the Boiling Rock.

SOKKA
What's that?

ZUKO
The highest security prison in the Fire Nation. It's on an island in the middle of a boiling lake. It's inescapable.

SOKKA
(nods, solemn)
So where is this place?

ZUKO
Why do you need to know? What are you planning?

SOKKA
Nothing. Boy, you're so paranoid.

Zuko narrows his eyes at Sokka.

ZUKO
It's in the middle of a volcano between here and the Fire Nation. You guys actually flew right past it on your way here.

SOKKA
(nods, smiles)
Thanks, Zuko. Just knowing makes me feel better.

ZUKO
(skeptical)
Yeah, I'm sure it does.

With that, Sokka heads out. Zuko heads back in to the party.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. WESTERN AIR TEMPLE - PRE-DAWN

It's completely still and quiet. Everyone's asleep, including Momo and Appa. Suddenly, there's a shadow sneaking around. It's Sokka carrying a bag and dressed to go out. He tiptoes around the animals, careful not to wake them.

EXT. MAIN TERRACE OF WESTERN AIR TEMPLE - CONTINUOUS

Sokka sneaks out and breathes a sigh of relief.

ZUKO (O.S.)
Not up to anything, huh?

SOKKA
(STARTLED SOUND)

Sokka is startled to see Zuko staring accusingly at him.

SOKKA (cont'd)
Fine, you caught me. I'm going to rescue my dad. You happy now?

ZUKO
I'm never happy.

SOKKA
Look, I have to do this. The invasion plan was my idea. It was my decision to stay when things were going wrong. It's my mistake, and it's my job to fix it. I have to regain my honor.

Sokka turns to leave, but Zuko BLOCKS him.

SOKKA (cont'd)
You can't stop me, Zuko.

ZUKO
You need to regain your honor? Believe me, I get it. I'm going with you.

SOKKA
No, I have to do this alone.

ZUKO
How are you going to get there -- on Appa? Last time I checked, prisons don't have bison day-cares.

Sokka thinks for a beat. Zuko has a good point.

SOKKA
(SIGHS)

ZUKO
We'll take my war balloon.

MATCH DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MAIN TERRACE OF WESTERN AIR TEMPLE - MORNING

Where Zuko and Sokka were just standing, Katara finds a NOTE.

TOPH
What does it say?

KATARA
(reading)
"Need meat. Gone fishing. Back in a few days. Sokka and Zuko. One more thing. Aang, practice your Firebending while I'm gone. Do twenty sets of fire fists and ten hot squats every time you hear a badgerfrog croak. Zuko."

BADGERFROG (O.S.)
Croak!

Katara and Toph turn to Aang who SIGHS and stalks off to practice.

AANG
(pouting)
Nobody else has homework.

Aang gets up and starts performing his hot squats.

42A AANG (cont'd) 42A
One -- hot squat! Two -- hot squat! Three -- hot squat! Four -- hot squat!

EXT. SKY - WAR BALLOON - DUSK

Zuko periodically Firebends into the balloon to keep it afloat while Sokka adjusts the valves to steer it. There's an uncomfortable silence. They're like strangers on an elevator trying to avoid eye contact.

SOKKA
Pretty clouds.

ZUKO
Yeah... fluffy.

Beat.

SOKKA
(WHISTLES)

ZUKO
What?

SOKKA
What? Oh, I didn't say anything.

Another beat.

SOKKA (cont'd)
You know, a friend of mine actually designed these war balloons.

ZUKO
No kidding.

SOKKA
Yup. A balloon... but for war.

ZUKO
(bitter sarcasm)
If there's one thing my dad's good at, it's war.

SOKKA
(equally sarcastic)
Yeah, that seems to run in the family.

ZUKO
Hey, hold on. Not everyone in my family is like that--

SOKKA
I know, I know. You've changed.

ZUKO
I meant my Uncle.

Zuko looks off into space.

ZUKO (cont'd)
He was more of a father to me -- and I really let him down...

Zuko looks down, ashamed of his old self. Sokka feels a little sorry for him.

SOKKA
I think your Uncle would be proud of you. Leaving your home to come help us -- that's hard.

ZUKO
(shrugs, dismissive)
It wasn't that hard.

SOKKA
Really? You didn't leave behind anyone you cared about?

Zuko thinks for a quick beat.

ZUKO
Well, I did have a girlfriend, Mai.

SOKKA
That gloomy girl who sighs a lot?

ZUKO
(reminiscing smile)
Yeah.
(then)
Everyone in the Fire Nation thinks I'm a traitor. I couldn't drag her into it.

Sokka nods. Beat.

SOKKA
My first girlfriend turned into the moon.

ZUKO
(sincere)
That's rough, buddy.

EXT. SKY - WAR BALLOON APPROACHING BOILING ROCK - NIGHT

Zuko Firebends into the balloon while Sokka steers the valves. Zuko points to a giant rocky volcano illuminated in the moonlight.

ZUKO
There it is...

Zuko looks over at the crater as they close in on it. Steam and fog roll out of it.

ZUKO (cont'd)
There's plenty of steam to keep us covered. As long as we're quiet, we should be able to navigate through it without being caught.

As the balloon finally passes OVER THE RIM, Sokka sees the prison for the first time. It's built on a small island in the middle of the lake. A tower on the island houses a gondola station -- it's connected by cables to another gondola station on the outer rim. (We'll discuss at the start-up meeting.) Huge PLUMES OF STEAM rise up from the water.

As the balloon starts to cross over the boiling lake, Zuko and Sokka can barely see as they roll into the thick clouds of steam. They're completely covered, but as they float further in, the balloon starts to descend. Zuko Firebends frantically into the balloon, but it continues to fall.

ZUKO (cont'd)
(frantic whispering)
We're going down! The balloon's not working anymore...

Zuko sends fireballs into the balloon, but to no avail.

SOKKA
It's a hot air balloon. The air outside is just as hot as the air inside, so we can't fly.

ZUKO
So what are we supposed to do?

SOKKA
I don't know, crash landing?

Sokka quickly adjusts the valves. Zuko continues to Firebend into the balloon, but it falls faster. They crash land on the side of the island -- because of the dark and all of the steam, the guard towers don't spot them.

EXT. BOILING ROCK ISLAND - CONTINUOUS

Zuko and Sokka pick themselves up from the fallen balloon.

ZUKO
How are we going to get off the island if the balloon won't work?

SOKKA
We'll figure something out. I suspected it might be a one-way ticket.

ZUKO
You knew this would happen and you wanted to come anyway?

SOKKA
My dad might be here. I had to come and see.

ZUKO
Uncle always said I never thought things through... But this...
(angry)
This is just crazy!

SOKKA
Hey, I never wanted you to come along in the first place! And for the record, I <u>always</u> think things through. But my plans haven't exactly worked, so this time I'm playing it by ear... so there!

With that, Sokka shoves the balloon into the water. Before Zuko can protest, Sokka interrupts.

ZUKO
What are you doing?

SOKKA
It doesn't work anyway, and we don't want anyone to find it.

Zuko and Sokka watch the balloon sink into the boiling water.

ZUKO
I hope you know what you're doing. There's no turning back now.

<u>END OF ACT ONE</u>

ACT TWO

EXT. PRISON ENTRANCE - NEXT MORNING

Prison guards march in a single file. (NOTE: These Fire Nation soldiers are an elite group of prison guards -- but more importantly, they wear helmets that cover their faces.) Suddenly, two guards run to the end of the line and start marching. They hold a hurried whisper conversation.

ZUKO
I hope these disguises work.

SOKKA
We just need to lay low and find my dad as soon as possible.

A GUARD runs out from the prison.

MALE GUARD #1
Guards! There's a scuffle in the yard. Come on!

The guards break formation and run in. Zuko and Sokka look at each other, then follow.

EXT. PRISON YARD - CONTINUOUS

Male and female prisoners mill around. Guards run in. We follow two of the guards, Sokka and Zuko, to the scuffle. At the side of the yard, CHIT SANG, a big, vicious, bad-ass prisoner, faces off with a BULLY GUARD who holds a WHIP.

CHIT SANG
I didn't do anything. I'm going back to my cell.

Chit Sang turns to walk away, but the bully guard cracks his whip in front of him to stop him. It's just to scare him, so it doesn't actually hit him.

BULLY GUARD
Stop right there, Chit Sang. I've had it with your unruly behavior.

CHIT SANG
What did I do?

Bully Guard CACKLES and turns to the crowd of prisoners and guards who have gathered to watch.

BULLY GUARD
He wants to know what he did. Isn't that cute?

The guards NOD and MURMUR in agreement.

ZUKO/ SOKKA
Very cute, sir./ Super cute.

Bully Guard opens the visor on his helmet and SMIRKS at the Chit Sang.

BULLY GUARD
You didn't bow down when I walked by, Chit Sang.

CHIT SANG
What? That's not a prison rule--

Bully Guard gets in Chit Sang's face.

BULLY GUARD
Do it.

Chit Sang stares at the Bully Guard square in the eye.

CHIT SANG
Make me.

Angry, Bully Guard aims his whip at the prisoner's knees. Zuko lunges forward to help, but Sokka pulls him back.

Bully Guard is about to hit Chit Sang, when Chit Sang Firebends and sets the whip ablaze. Bully Guard drops his burning whip. He's mad, but then SMIRKS.

BULLY GUARD
Tsk, tsk, Firebending is prohibited. You're going in the Cooler.

The prisoners GASP at the mention of the "Cooler." Bully Guard points to Sokka.

BULLY GUARD (cont'd)
You, help me take him in.

SOKKA
(sotto to Zuko)
Meet back here in an hour.

Zuko nods. Sokka and the bully guard grab Chit Sang and lead him away.

INT. PRISON - ISOLATION CHAMBERS - MOMENTS LATER

It's a large gymnasium-size room that houses five metal vertical cylinders, each with a single window at head-height. These are the "Coolers." The cylinders are about 10 feet tall and 6 feet in diameter. Chit Sang, Bully Guard, and Sokka enter. Bully Guard opens the door to one of the cylinders. Sokka peers inside and feels the cold air WHOOSH out. Bully Guard SHOVES Chit Sang in...

BULLY GUARD
(to Chit Sang)
The Warden will deal with you soon.

...and SLAMS the door.

BULLY GUARD (cont'd)
(to Sokka)
Can you believe this guy?

SOKKA
(humoring him)
Prisoners, am I right?

BULLY GUARD
Tell me about it.

INT. GUARD LOUNGE - SIMULTANEOUS

Male and female guards sit around sipping tea with their helmets off. Zuko enters. Trying not to look suspicious, Zuko pours himself tea and sits. The guards watch as Zuko brings the tea cup to his mouth to drink it but then realizes he can't take off his mask and puts the cup back down.

MALE GUARD #2
Hey new guy -- I know it's the rule to have your helmet on at all times, but this is the lounge, relax.

ZUKO
But what if there's an incident? If I'm not prepared, someone could strike me on the head.

ALL GUARDS
(MILDLY DERISIVE LAUGHTER)

FEMALE GUARD #1
(to other guards)
Give it a week, he'll loosen up.

Zuko continues to sit with his helmet on. He gets an idea.

ZUKO
Can the new guy ask you veterans a few questions about the prison?

FEMALE GUARD #1
No, you can't date the female guards.

MALE GUARD #2
(leans to Zuko)
Trust me, you don't want to.

ZUKO
No, that's not it. The Boiling Rock -- it holds the Fire Nation's most dangerous criminals, right?

The guards NOD.

ZUKO (cont'd)
So what about war prisoners?

INT. ISOLATION CHAMBERS - MOMENTS LATER

The bully guard stands watch, as Sokka casually peers into the Cooler. Chit Sang is huddled, trying to stay warm. It's so cold, we can see his breath.

SOKKA
It sure looks cold in there.

BULLY GUARD
(scoffs)
That's why we call it the Cooler.

The guard SMIRKS at Chit Sang huddled in the corner.

BULLY GUARD (cont'd)
He won't be Firebending in there.

Just then, the WARDEN, a stern, no-nonsense man strides in with his TWO BODYGUARDS. (NOTE: The Warden has a more elaborate uniform and doesn't wear a helmet.)

BULLY GUARD (cont'd)
(whisper to Sokka)
It's the Warden, look alive.

As the Warden marches by, Bully Guard salutes him. Sokka imitates the gesture. The Warden stops in front of the Cooler. On cue, Bully Guard quickly opens the door.

Chit Sang is so cold he's cowering on the floor hugging his knees. The Warden stares down at him.

WARDEN
So, Chit Sang, I hear you used Firebending to try to escape. You should know better.

CHIT SANG
(shivering)
I wasn't trying to escape.

BULLY GUARD
He's lying. I saw him with my own eyes.

WARDEN
No one has ever, ever escaped from here. I'd sooner jump in the boiling lake myself than let that record fall -- don't forget it. Now, go back to your shivering.

With that the door to Chit Sang's Cooler is closed again.

EXT. PRISON YARD - LATER

Sokka, still in disguise, casually leans against a pole. Another guard, Zuko, sidles up to him. (They're not sure of each other's identity at first.)

ZUKO
(cautious)
Hey there... fellow guard. How goes it?

SOKKA
(a little too loud)
Zuko?

ZUKO
Ssh! Listen, I asked around the lounge. There are no Water Tribe prisoners... I'm afraid your father's not here.

SOKKA
(flustered)
What? Are you sure? Did you double check?

ZUKO
(solemn)
Yeah. I'm sure.

SOKKA
(stunned)
No...
(kicks fence)
No!

Zuko puts his hand on Sokka's shoulder.

ZUKO
I'm really sorry, Sokka.

SOKKA
So we came all this way for nothing. I failed... again.

Sokka slumps against the fence, dejected and disappointed. Zuko tries to cheer him up.

ZUKO
(to himself)
What would Uncle say...?
(to Sokka)
Sometimes, clouds have two sides... a dark and a light -- and a silver lining in between... it's like a silver sandwich. So when life seems hard, take a bite of the silver sandwich.

Sokka stares into the horizon. He lifts open his helmet to do a double take at something he sees. Suddenly, he smiles.

SOKKA
Maybe we haven't failed after all.

ZUKO
That's the spirit.
(to self)
I can't believe that worked. I didn't even know what I was saying.

SOKKA
No, what you said made no sense at all. But look...

Sokka nods toward something. Zuko looks over. In the distance is a group of female inmates marching back into the prison. We zoom in on one particular prisoner, Suki, just as she exits the yard.

SOKKA (cont'd)
It's Suki!

INTERCOM
Prisoners, back in your cells.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SUKI'S CELL - NIGHT

Suki watches as the door opens and a guard struts in. It's Sokka, but Suki doesn't recognize him in uniform.

SUKI
What is it? Did I do something wrong?

SOKKA
(coy)
You mean, you don't recognize me?

SUKI
(shrugs)
You people all look the same to me.

SOKKA
Oh? Then maybe you'll recognize this...

Reminiscent of 2.12, Sokka leans in for a kiss, but Suki panics and punches him in the gut. Sokka rolls to the ground and his helmet falls off.

SUKI
Sokka! It's you!

Suki helps Sokka up and embraces him in the biggest hug ever.

SOKKA
The other Kyoshi Warriors -- are they here?

SUKI
No. I don't know where they are. They locked me in here because I'm the leader.

SOKKA
Well, you won't be here for long. I'm busting you out.

Suki gazes at Sokka.

SUKI
I'm so glad to see you, Sokka. I knew you'd come.

Suki and Sokka embrace again.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE OF SUKI'S CELL - CONTINUOUS

Through the open door, we see Sokka and Suki in the B.G. Zuko stands watch. Just then, a FEMALE GUARD walks toward him. Zuko attempts to signal Sokka in the cell, but he's too busy kissing Suki. Zuko runs over to the approaching guard, blocking her view of Suki's cell.

FEMALE GUARD #1
Excuse me. I need to get into that cell.

She points to Suki's cell.

ZUKO
(fumbling a little)
No, you can't go in there. The lights are out. The prisoner could sneak up on you.

FEMALE GUARD #1
Step aside, fool.

The guard shoves Zuko out of the way and proceeds. She's about to enter Suki's cell when Zuko tackles her.

FEMALE GUARD #1 (cont'd)
Hey, what are you doing?!

Zuko's helmet falls off during the struggle. Meanwhile, Sokka sneaks out of Suki's cell (helmet back on) and runs over to the fight.

FEMALE GUARD #1 (cont'd)
(to Sokka)
Guard, help! I think he's an imposter -- arrest him!

Sokka looks down at Zuko -- now what are they going to do?

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE OF SUKI'S CELL - NIGHT

Sokka, Zuko, and the female guard are in the same position as before.

FEMALE GUARD #1
(to Sokka)
Get him off me and arrest him!

Sokka looks from the female guard to Zuko, trying to make a decision. He grabs Zuko, pins him against the wall and handcuffs him.

SOKKA
You're under arrest!
(whispers)
Don't worry. I'll figure it out.

INT. ZUKO'S CELL - DAY

Zuko paces. He's now dressed in prison garb. A visitor arrives -- it's the warden.

WARDEN
Well, well, well... I never thought I'd find you in here... Prince Zuko.

Zuko is shocked but tries to cover and remain cool.

ZUKO
How did you know who I am?

WARDEN
How could I not? You broke my niece's heart.

ZUKO
You're Mai's Uncle?
(shakes his head)
I never meant to hurt her--

WARDEN
Quiet! You're my special prisoner now. And you best behave.
(smirks)
If these criminals found out who you are -- the traitor prince who let his nation down -- why, they'd tear you to shreds.

ZUKO
So what's in it for you? Why don't you just tell my father and collect a reward?

The Warden smiles.

WARDEN
Oh, in due time, believe me, I intend to collect.

With that, the Warden slams the door, leaving Zuko alone.

EXT. PRISON YARD - LATER

Zuko and Suki mill about with the other prisoners. A guard approaches them -- it's Sokka.

SOKKA
Oh good, you guys have met.

SUKI
Actually, we met a long time ago.

ZUKO
We did?

SUKI
Yeah, I ah...
(long beat)
...You kind of burned down my village.

ZUKO
Oh, Sorry about that. Nice to see you again.

SOKKA
So listen, I think I have an escape plan. I checked out the Coolers again. The whole point of them is to keep Firebenders contained, right?

ZUKO
Yeah...

SOKKA
So they're completely insulated, and sealed to keep the cold in. Well, to keep the cold in, it also has to keep the heat <u>out</u>, right?

SUKI
Just get to the point, Sokka.

SOKKA
It's a perfect boat for getting through the boiling water!

ZUKO
The Cooler as a boat? Are you sure?

SOKKA
I'm telling you, it'll work...

As Sokka narrates, we...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BOILING ROCK ISLAND SHORE - DAY

Sokka walks along the shore, looking around at his surroundings. He stops between two tall guard towers. He looks up and eyes the towers.

SOKKA (V.O.)
I walked around the perimeter. There's a blind spot between two guard towers. It's the perfect launching point. I already tested it out.

Sokka puts a PAPER BOAT in the bubbling, boiling water. The current pulls the boat away from the island toward the far shore.

SOKKA (V.O.) (cont'd)
We'll roll the Cooler into the water and just float with the current. It'll take us straight across. As long as we don't make a sound, no one will notice.

The boat successfully floats across to the other shore.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PRISON YARD - CONTINUOUS

Sokka concludes his plan to Zuko and Suki.

SOKKA
And bing-bang-boom, we're home free!

SUKI
But how are you going to get the Cooler out?

GRUFF MAN (O.S.)
Yeah, how are you going to get the Cooler out?

They turn to see Chit Sang who has apparently been eavesdropping. (NOTE TO STORYBOARD ARTIST: This will be an exciting staging challenge!) The kids try to cover.

SOKKA
(flustered, guilty)
What? We... We didn't say that.

ZUKO
Yeah. You heard wrong.

CHIT SANG
I heard you hatching an escape plan. And I want in.

ZUKO
There's nothing to get in on.

SOKKA
Yeah, the only thing we're hatching is... an egg?

CHIT SANG
Okay, well, I come with you or the Warden hears about this "egg," too.

Zuko looks to Sokka and Suki.

SUKI
I guess we have no choice.

SOKKA
(nods, to Chit Sang)
Okay, you're in. Now first we need someone to unbolt the Cooler...
(hands Zuko a tool)
...from the inside.

CHIT SANG
Oh, I can get you inside!

Chit Sang gives Zuko a STAGED SHOVE.

CHIT SANG (cont'd)
Hey, what are you, stupid? Watch where you're going.

Chit Sang's yelling attracts attention. Zuko pushes him back.

ZUKO
Hey! You watch who you're shoving.

CHIT SANG
I think you mean "whom" I'm shoving!

Inmates run over to watch the fight. Sokka yells for other guards.

SOKKA
I need backup over here!

Zuko and Chit Sang face off, throwing and dodging punches. (NOTE: Because it's staged, their punches never make contact.) Zuko eyes the guards running toward them. When they're in plain view of the fight, Zuko FIREBENDS at Chit Sang who jumps back. The guards run up and grab Zuko.

MALE GUARD #1
No Firebending! Into the Cooler!

As the guards drag Zuko away, they pass Suki and Sokka who slightly nods an acknowledgment to Zuko.

INT. ISOLATION CHAMBERS - PRE-DAWN

Sokka opens the door to a Cooler. Zuko is huddled inside.

SOKKA
I can take you back to your cell if you've "learned your lesson."

ZUKO
Yes, I have... completely.

Zuko nods and cocks his head toward the wall -- the bolts are loosened.

INT. PRISON HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Sokka walks with Zuko.

SOKKA
(whispers)
I got Suki and Chit Sang out of their cells a few minutes ago. They'll be waiting for us at the shore--

Zuko covers Sokka's mouth and pulls him into the shadows.

ZUKO
(to Sokka)
Someone's coming.

They are quiet as two guards stroll by unaware.

MALE GUARD #2
...yeah, new arrivals coming in at dawn.

FEMALE GUARD #1
Anybody interesting?

MALE GUARD #2
Nah. Just the usual: some robbers, couple of traitors, some war prisoners.
(brightens)
Though I did hear there might be a pirate.

FEMALE GUARD #1
No fooling?

When they're out of earshot, Zuko turns to Sokka.

ZUKO
War prisoners. It could be your father!

SOKKA
(anguished)
I know.

ZUKO
Well, what should we do? Are we going ahead with the plan or are we waiting another night?

SOKKA
I don't know... is it right for me to risk Suki's freedom, all of our freedom on the slim chance that my dad is going to show up?

ZUKO
It's your call, Sokka.

Sokka closes his eyes, tormented by the decision he has to make.

EXT. BOILING ROCK SHORE - PRE-DAWN

It's the secluded area between the two guard towers that Sokka mentioned earlier. Chit Sang and two other prisoners (one male, one female) wait by the Cooler near the water. Sokka marches in, Zuko and Suki hesitantly follow.

CHIT SANG
Took you guys long enough. This here's my girl and my best buddy. They're coming too.

SOKKA
Fine. Everybody in the cooler. Let's go.

Zuko grabs Sokka and pulls him aside.

ZUKO
Are you sure you want to go? You're the one who said you wanted to redeem yourself -- redeem your honor. Rescuing your dad is your chance--

SUKI
Your dad?

SOKKA
If I had just cut my losses at the invasion... maybe we wouldn't be in this mess. Maybe sometimes it's just better to call it quits before you fail.

ZUKO
No, it's not. Look, Sokka, you're going to fail a lot before things work out.

Sokka thinks for a beat.

SOKKA
That's supposed to make me feel better?

ZUKO
Even though you'll probably fail over and over and over again--

SOKKA
Seriously, not helping.

ZUKO
You have to try every time. You can't quit because you're afraid you might fail.

Sokka thinks about it for a beat.

CHIT SANG
Hey, if you two are done cuddlin', can we get a move on?

Sokka turns to the others.

SOKKA
No -- I'm staying.
(to Zuko and Suki)
You guys go.
(grabbing Suki)
You've been here long enough.

SUKI
I'm not leaving without you, Sokka.

ZUKO
I'm staying too.

CHIT SANG
Not me, I'm out! Let's roll, baby.

Chit Sang and his cronies push the Cooler into the water and hop in. Sokka, Zuko and Suki watch them sail away.

SOKKA
We gave up our only chance of escaping.
(beat)
I hope we haven't just made a huge mistake.

EXT. BOILING LAKE - DAWN

Chit Sang and his friends float in the Cooler. As they inch forward, Chit Sang looks around impatiently.

CHIT SANG
This current is so slow.

He spots a window that had been detached from the door during the move.

CHIT SANG (cont'd)
I can use this to paddle.

Chit Sang picks up the window and dips it into the water with a loud "PLOP."

We go dramatically CLOSE to a cobra-bat resting on a guard tower. We hear the "plop" echo as the cobra-bat's huge ears FLAP open. It opens its eyes and CAWS loudly. Various tower guards now turn and see the fugitives in the water.

EXT. PRISON YARD - CONTINUOUS

A LOUD and DEAFENING alarm sounds. The prisoners, including Suki and Zuko, cover their ears in confusion. The Warden marches in.

WARDEN
Guards! Secure the perimeter and lock down the prisoners! Now!

Guards herd prisoners inside. Sokka grabs Suki and Zuko.

SOKKA
(loud whisper)
The plan failed. They're caught.

Sokka, Suki and Zuko pass the Warden barking orders at his guards.

WARDEN
Get the fugitives, and throw them in the Cooler.

LOWLY GUARD
Uh, they are in a Cooler, sir.

WARDEN
(irritated)
One that's bolted down and not floating in the water.
(shouting to guards)
This is a lockdown! We have new prisoners arriving -- everything must be completely secure.

Sokka suddenly stops walking and looks up.

SOKKA
The gondola's moving!

Suki and Zuko follow Sokka's eyes. (NOTE: The gondola is high enough so they can see it above the prison walls.) As the sun rises, the gondola starts to move from the crater rim toward the prison -- we hear a steady CLANKING sound.

SOKKA (cont'd)
This is it.

In the B.G, we see guards wrangling the prisoners. The alarm is still RINGING. It's chaos. But Sokka is focused on the moving gondola. It finally stops at the landing. Sokka takes a deep breath.

SOKKA (cont'd)
If my dad's not there, we risked everything for nothing.

SUKI
We had to.

Suki grabs Sokka's hand and SQUEEZES it. The gondola doors open. A guard comes out. One by one, shackled prisoners are led off. Sokka stares at every prisoner who exits.

SOKKA
Come on, come on.

A pirate-looking prisoner exits the gondola.

ZUKO
Is that him?

SOKKA
My dad doesn't have a nose ring.

Zuko shrugs. Sokka watches as the last prisoner exits the gondola.

SOKKA (cont'd)
Where is he?

Beat. No one else exits.

SOKKA (cont'd)
That's it? That can't be it.

Suki puts her hand on Sokka's shoulders.

SUKI
I'm sorry, Sokka.

Sokka hangs his head in disappointment.

SOKKA
Oh no...

GONDOLA GUARD
Hey you, get off the gondola!

Sokka looks up. We go to...

SOKKA'S POV:

The alarm and the chaos is silenced as Sokka focuses on the prisoner exiting. A foot steps out onto the landing. We can hear Sokka's heart POUNDING.

The prisoner steps out of the gondola. He looks up. It's Hakoda. Sokka exhales a sigh of relief.

SOKKA
(whispers)
Dad.

END OF PART ONE